

What I claim as my invention is:

1. A device for cooling and thereby de-sensitizing an area of human skin immediately prior to hypodermic injection, the device comprising:

a body comprising an open end, an interior wall extending inwardly from the open end, the interior wall partially defining a reservoir that extends into the body;

a cover removably sealing and closing the open end of the body, the cover and interior wall enclosing the reservoir;

a cooling medium in the reservoir; and

means for retaining the cooling medium in the body when the cover is removed;

the body, cover and cooling medium capable of being cooled to an application temperature substantially below room temperature;

whereby removing the cover exposes the cooled cooling medium such that placing the open end of the body against the skin causes sufficient heat transfer between the cooling medium and the skin to materially de-sensitize the skin.

2. The device of claim 1 wherein the cooling medium is solid at the application temperature.

3. The device of claim 1 wherein the cooling medium is sterile and the cover maintains a sterile environment within the reservoir prior to use.

4. The device of claim 1 wherein the cooling medium is liquid at room temperature.

5. The device of claim 4 wherein the cooling medium comprises water or a water mixture.

6. The device of claim 1 wherein the cover is formed from substantially planar sheet material.

7. The device of claim 1 wherein the body is a single piece of plastic.

8. The device of claim 1 wherein the open end of the body has an elongated shape or is "C"-shaped.

9. The device of claim 1 wherein the body comprises an applicator portion at the open end of the body to be pressed against the skin and a handle portion defining a handle at the other end of the body, a substantial portion of the handle away from the cooling medium to enable grasping the handle without substantial heat transfer through the handle to the cooling medium.

10. The device of claim 1 wherein the open end of the body is sized such that the device is capable of simultaneously cooling a plurality of injection sites on the skin.

11. The device of claim 1 wherein the cover is a first cover and the cooling medium incorporates a second cover closing the open end of the body, the second cover sealingly mounted on the body and remaining on the body after the first cover is removed.

12. The device of claim 1 wherein the retaining means comprises structure extending inwardly into the reservoir from the body wall and engaging the cooling medium.

13. The device of claim 1 wherein the open end of the body is sized such that the device is capable of cooling an area of skin away from the an injection site and infiltrated by medicant.

14. A method of reducing pain generated by hypodermic injections at a plurality of injection sites in human skin, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) applying a cooling medium against an area of skin, the perimeter of the area enclosing the plurality of injection sites, the cooling medium capable of cooling the skin sufficiently to simultaneously de-sensitize each of the injection sites;

(b) maintaining the cooling medium against the area of skin for a length of time sufficient to materially de-sensitize the entire area of skin; and

(c) serially administering a hypodermic injection at each injection site while the area of skin remains de-sensitized without additional application of a cooling medium between injections.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein step (a) comprises the step of applying ice in contact with the skin.

16. The method of claim 15 wherein the applied ice is sterile ice.